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EDITORIAL NOTES

In the confused struggle that is going on in the school system of Chicago there are three more or less conflicting forces: the superintendent of schools, Mr. E. G. Cooley, known by reputation to all readers of the *Review*; a Board of Education, recently reconstituted by Mayor Dunne, which has shown itself critical of, and at times hostile to, the policies which the superintendent claims to be necessary to his efficient direction of the schools of the city; and finally the Teachers' Federation, which has fought what it has considered the cause of the teachers in the courts, in the city council, and at the capital of the state.

Superintendent Cooley won recognition, when he came into the system, by suppressing political pull in the appointment of teachers and by efficient organization of the school system. These achievements of his are not now subject to criticism. He has, however, identified himself with a procedure in the promotion of teachers which has remained the bone of contention from the time when it was inaugurated up to the present time. It is to be noted that it has provided ever-increasing fuel for the conflict between the superintendent and a large part of the teaching force, which has grown steadily more profound and more bitter since its inauguration.

The Teachers' Federation is chiefly known for two things. When the Board of Education some years ago cut down the salaries of the teachers because of lack of funds in their treasury, this federation through its officers investigated the sources of revenue of the city, discovered numerous instances of tax-dodging, took these into court, and brought into the treasury of the city \$600,000 which but for their efforts would have been yearly lost to the city government. Of this, \$250,000 goes annually into the treasury of the Board of Education. When the school board compromised the suit brought by the Teachers' Federation and paid these teachers the amount that had been withheld from their salaries, the Federation unquestionably lost a great opportunity in not dividing this money among all the teachers who had suffered, and in whose interests they professed to be fighting. The Federation undertook also to further and protect the interests, or what it conceived to be the interests of the teachers in combating legislation at Springfield and in influencing the administration in the city of Chicago. It sought for political backing, and found it only among the labor unions. Organized labor in the city gave them this backing, but asked them almost as a *quid pro quo* to become affiliated with the Federation of Labor. It is only fair to note that the teachers in this federation have not been unionized, that they are under no obligations to identify themselves with the labor fights in the city, and

that they have not done so. They have gained very considerable influence through their affiliation with federated labor. It would be difficult to point to any return they have made beyond the mere fact of their affiliation.

It should be noted, further, that the moment at which the new method of promotion was introduced was that at which it was necessary to cut down the salaries of the teachers. This method called for an examination at the end of seven years of service, as the test of the teachers' eligibility for further advance in salary. The examination was to be upon work done outside the schoolroom upon academic subjects in the main.¹ The impression was quite generally formed that the examination formed a barrier to the advancement of a large number of teachers, and thus relieved the treasury proportionately, while it removed from the city the stigma of cutting down the teachers' salaries because of lack of funds.

It is, of course, unjust to imply that this was the end which Superintendent Cooley had in mind. He is a firm believer in the efficacy of such outside academic work in increasing the effectiveness of the teaching force. It is, however, easy to see that the introduction of the measure at such a time and with such a result has embittered the teachers who had themselves by their unaided efforts been enriching the city's treasury. It seemed like a sinister return for their laudable and public-spirited achievement.

It is questionable whether the city of Chicago has ever had as much intellectual ability, as much restless energy and public-spirited devotion represented on its somewhat unwieldy school board as at present. Among those appointed by Mayor Dunne the majority perhaps have been in sympathy with the struggle which the Teachers' Federation has been making, and have been ready to support the criticisms made upon Superintendent Cooley's policy of promotion by the teachers of the Federation.

That the board has been perfectly honest in its exhausting efforts to reach a conclusion in this fight there is not a moment's ground for questioning. Its members have been called radical and socialistic. They have been abominably abused by the city press, but no evidence has been presented to indicate any improper motive behind their discussions nor their reports. Furthermore, the press of the city has consistently refused to discuss the presentations they have made or the arguments they have brought forward. It is not remarkable that in so bitter, so long a struggle, the question as to which side one stands upon should become of more importance than the seeming issue at stake.

The issue at present is whether examination in subjects pursued outside the schoolroom should be made the means of testing the eligibility of a teacher to advance in salary. And this issue thus stated covers up unrecog-

¹ Some of the objections to the system were met by substituting for the examinations credits received in the extension classes of the Chicago Normal School, and from courses in degree-giving institutions, although it was not felt that this affected the principles at stake.

nized other issues which ought in all conscience to be brought to the surface. No one can decently question the statement that a teacher's efficiency ought to be tested by the success of her work in the schoolroom. Everyone has the right to have his capacity tested by his achievements. On the other hand, it is equally self-evident that no teacher can afford to abandon reading and study that goes beyond her routine work. But to deduce from these propositions either that examinations should or should not determine advancement in salary is a hopeless *non sequitur*.

The superintendent's interest in the examinations lies in the fact that these can be used as spurs to incite the teachers to study outside the schoolroom. The teachers' objection to examinations lies in their demand to be judged by their work, and their failure to find any relation between the outside study and their immediate vocation. They consider the examinations artificial and not germane to their teaching. It should be added that these criticisms are passed by the teachers of the Federation, and a number outside who sympathize with them, but that there is a considerable body of teachers who accept the system and are willing to be judged by it.

The conclusion that can be drawn from these premises is that a vital and organic connection should be found between the outside study of the teacher and her work in the schoolroom. There is no reason to believe that the intelligent teacher would be hostile to courses of study which she felt were assisting her where she recognized that her work was weak. It is the nature of any genuine workman to be grateful for assistance. Nor is it conceivable that the superintendent could do otherwise than welcome motives for study which should be more effective, and which would be free from the charge of artificiality that can be made against any system of mere examination.

This vital connection between study and schoolroom work is not far to seek. The methods of teaching all subjects in the curriculum is constantly changing, and we hope improving. The subject-matter itself is constantly growing in richness and interrelationship. The reading and studying that any teacher should carry on is demanded, not simply that she may keep from ossifying, but that she may keep up with the demands of her profession. Given libraries, the laboratories, the courses of lectures—in other words, the opportunities—and there is no limit to the amount of profitable work that would greet the teacher who would improve in her calling.

It is, however, equally necessary that the teacher should have competent guidance. Chicago has at present one superintendent and three assistant superintendents to keep track of 5,500 teachers. On the basis of the New York school system, Chicago should have at least sixteen assistant or associate superintendents. It is questionable whether New York has enough, but it is no wonder that Superintendent Cooley wishes a marking system for teachers which estimates them in percentages, however meaningless these percentages may be, that he may translate this vast number of human beings into numerical symbols. He cannot possibly deal with them in any other way.

The teachers themselves have not asked for such an increase of the staff of superintendents. They wish to be judged as to their efficiency by their principles. The demand is natural. The principal is constantly present and knows the whole situation with which the teacher has to contend. If the test were to be simply of general efficiency, one might be willing to rest the judgment with the principal, if he felt that the principal could be trusted to be impartial. The demand, however, which we have indicated for supplementary work by the teacher, has to do with the different phases of her work and calls for the judgment of experts in different fields of practical pedagogy. The average principal is not competent to criticize and direct the teacher in this supplementary work.

The superintendent of the Chicago schools should be surrounded by a faculty of men and women of the broadest training and experience, with varied specialties, who could come into the schoolroom, not as hostile and infrequent critics, but as recognized assistants of the teachers in their work and training, ready to point out defects only where they indicated means of correcting them. Such work would be related directly to the growth of efficiency in teaching, not to promotional examinations. Its relation to promotion, so far as it should have any, would be through its effects upon the teaching.

As the force of assistant superintendents has been diminished in the past, the superintendent has secured an increasingly centralized administration, and by this type of business management of what is not business, but pedagogy, has forced himself to reduce his teachers to percentages and his estimate of their personalities to examination marks. But what is most serious, his theory of examinations has provided the issue which has been responsible for the Teachers' Federation and its affiliation with organized labor. The Teachers' Federation came into existence to fight a battle; and not only is the system of promotional examinations not worth the fight, but it has obscured the real issue of the vital relation between teaching and the teacher's outside work, and the necessary conditions of such a vital relation.

The Merchants' Club of the City of Chicago showed its interest in the question by inviting a number of prominent educators to speak before them upon the school problems confronting the city. Among these men was President Nicolas Murray Butler, of Columbia University. It seems strange that President Butler should have declared that school administration is a business proposition pure and simple.

The business propositions with which a school board has to deal are the conditions of school administration; but, so long as this administration has as its ultimate end, neither the making nor the spending of money, but the development of the personalities of the children by means of the personalities of the teachers, such a statement is a distinct degradation of the function of the Board of Education.

Considering the position which President Butler has taken in the past,

notably in the report of the Committee of Fifteen, with reference to the position of the teacher in the school system, it seems still stranger that he should have announced that it is as absurd to speak of the democratization of the operation for appendicitis as of the democratization of the schools.

This amounts to saying that technical skill has reduced teaching to a mechanical operation; that, granted the technical skill of the teacher, we are called upon to consider his personality as little as we are that of the surgeon who uses the knife. The very perfection of surgery tends to make its operations highly mechanical. Every real advance in educational technique serves to make the process of education less mechanical, and the recognition of the personalities of children and teachers more profound and effective. It is just this recognition of the personalities of teachers and children, with all that it implies, which is meant by the democratization of the schools. It means that the Board of Education, its executive officers, and the community shall recognize that education is a social process, and not a mechanical art.

There is no social functionary who is more unfortunately isolated than the teacher in the schoolroom in our city schools. Above her stands the vast system of school administration giving her books and methods which she is to use; and before her stand the children who can receive the contents of the curriculum and be affected by the methods of the school only through her agency. There is no natural way in which she can react back upon the administration, by which she can make herself individually or collectively felt in the system of which she is the most important part. If she is a person and not simply a piece of machinery, there is certainly call for democratization of the schools.

It is here that we find a still more profound reason for the existence of the Teachers' Federation than that to which we have already referred. Until the teachers have as natural a method of expressing themselves within the school system which they must put in operation as a faculty in a university, there will exist the situation out of which irresponsible bodies like the Teachers' Federation will arise. It is immoral to demand that our teachers throw themselves heart and soul into the social activity of educating our children and then deny them any voice in criticizing, interpreting, fashioning the ways and means that they are to use. We can get the mechanical skill of army drill by mere discipline and acceptance of direction from above; we cannot get the moral relationship of persons by such means.

In a word, there are in the Chicago school system two evils, which must be held responsible for the existence of the Teachers' Federation and its affiliations. These are: a failure to provide a vital relation between the work in the schoolroom and that which the teacher should do outside—a failure which is responsible for this whole stupid wrangle over promotional examinations; and the entire absence in the administration of the schools of a natural way by which the teachers may express themselves, offer criticisms and suggestions with reference to the methods and books which they alone are

to use, and find that opportunity for voluntary identification with the methods and plans of the schools which alone can bring full moral responsibility.

It is certainly hopeful that Miss Jane Addams has secured the introduction into the report of the School Management Committee of free periods for teachers' study in the extension department of the city normal school; that Mr. Cooley has asked for three new assistant superintendents; and that the board may be counted upon to bring forward some plan for teachers' councils. All of these steps are movements in the right direction. They could be rendered still more rapid and definitive if the community could only recognize that this is at bottom a struggle over a real educational issue, and not a sordid wrangle between the externally organized teachers and the superintendent.